

After months of pushing a bipartisan earmark moratorium, House Republicans might get a chance to vote for one today.

With the first regular spending bill of the year on the floor — the military construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill — anti-earmark conservatives plan to offer an amendment striking all 103 Member earmarks.

“I think this amendment is consistent with our Conference’s call for a bipartisan earmark moratorium, so it ought to be a pretty good test of how serious we are,” said Rep. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.), who plans to offer the amendment with a fellow anti-earmark crusader, **Rep. John Campbell (R-Calif.)**.

House Republican leaders have been pushing for a bipartisan moratorium, but the party fractured internally over whether to forgo GOP earmarks unilaterally.

If the amendment passes, however, Republican leaders would appear to get what they say they want — no earmarks for both parties. The GOP had backed the creation of a committee to overhaul the earmark process, but in the meantime they advocated enforcing a bipartisan earmark moratorium, provided that Democrats agreed. (Democrats dismissed the idea out of hand.)

Prospects for the Flake-Campbell amendment would appear dim to nonexistent. A vote last year on a similar amendment from House Appropriations Chairman David Obey (D-Wis.) failed overwhelmingly, and the politically sensitive nature of the military construction bill could give Members heartburn.

Members backing the amendment would be on record voting to cut military and veterans spending because the amendment would cut the earmark funding from the underlying bill rather than keep the money in military and veterans accounts.

The amendment does not target earmarks requested by the Bush administration, nor does it target earmarks requested both by the administration and a Member.

Flake and Campbell have long planned to bring scores of amendments attacking individual earmarks on appropriations bills this summer but have been stymied as Democrats held up floor action. They do not intend to hold numerous votes on individual earmarks on the military construction bill. Flake spokesman Matthew Specht said the Congressman still expected to bring numerous amendments against earmarks in the Defense appropriations bill — many more than in previous years — if it comes to the floor in September as expected.

A House GOP leadership aide, noting that the amendment would likely fail, nonetheless said it was far preferable to sitting through endless votes on individual earmarks.

“What Flake is doing is really a win-win for everyone,” the aide said. “On the one hand, we don’t have to go through hundreds of amendments on a military construction-Veterans bill. On the other hand, Flake gets a vote striking all earmarks.”

Republican Conference Chairman Adam Putnam (Fla.) said he was not aware that there would be such an amendment, but he said Republicans would be combing through the bill looking for wasteful earmarks.